

DATELINE: #76 WASHINGTON, D.C.
ALINA ZERANSKI

APRIL 28, 1976

WAITING FOR THE DISCLOSURE OF A STATE SECRET
(INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- PICTURES IN SOUND OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES -- BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, A REPORT PREPARED BY ALINA ZERANSKI ON A VISIT TO ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS, PROJECTING TWO HUNDRED YEARS OF LIFE STYLES AT THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE. YOUR REPORTER IS _____.

NARR: MOST VISITORS TO WASHINGTON, D.C., WANT TO SEE THE LINDBERGH PLANE, THE FAMOUS HOPE DIAMOND AND...THE FIRST LADIES HALL AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION. EVERY YEAR AT LEAST SIX MILLION PEOPLE ADMIRE THE AUTHENTIC FIRST LADIES' GOWNS, EXHIBITED IN THEIR PERIOD SETTINGS. BUT NOW, THIS HALL ATTRACTS ADDITIONAL ATTENTION. IN THIS BICENTENNIAL YEAR, MANY MORE VISITORS ARE COMING. WITH THE NATION'S INTEREST TURNED TOWARDS HISTORY, A NEW SENSE OF EXCITEMENT SEEMS TO SURROUND THE NEW ADDITION TO THE COLLECTION: MRS. FORD'S GOWN, WHICH IS BEING PREPARED TO BE DISPLAYED THIS SUMMER. WHAT DID SHE CHOOSE? HOW DOES IT LOOK? UNTIL THEN, THIS WILL BE KEPT ALMOST AS A STATE SECRET.

MARGARET BROWN KLAPTHOR IS THE CURATOR OF THE FIRST LADIES HALL.

TAPE: CUT ONE -- KLAPTHOR

"THE FIRST LADIES OF THE UNITED STATES ARE THE PERSONS WHO ACT AS THE HOSTESS AT THE WHITE HOUSE DURING A PRESIDENTIAL ADMINISTRATION. IT IS USUALLY THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE, BUT IF THE PRESIDENT'S WIFE IS INCAPACITATED BY ILLNESS, OR IF SHE HAS DIED BEFORE THE GENTLEMAN COMES INTO THE OFFICE, THEN THE DUTY IS DELEGATED TO ANOTHER MEMBER OF THE FAMILY. [SO, WHAT WE HAVE HERE AT THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION IS A DRESS REPRESENTING EACH ADMINISTRATION OF THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES FROM GEORGE WASHINGTON DOWN TO THE LAST ONE THAT IS IN AT THE PRESENT TIME, MRS. RICHARD NIXON'S. THIS COLLECTION OF DRESSES IS A REMARKABLE EXAMPLE OF CHANGES IN PERIOD COSTUME IN THIS COUNTRY THROUGH THE YEARS, THE WAY WOMEN HAVE DRESSED FROM 1789 DOWN TO THE PRESENT DAY.]"

NARR: THE LIGHT IS DIM. IT ENHANCES THE ROMANTIC ATMOSPHERE AND IT ALSO PROTECTS THE COLORING OF THE DELICATE FABRICS. IN MANY CASES IT HAS ALREADY FADED TO PEARL GREY OR SOFT BEIGE. TO AVOID DISTRACTING THE VISITORS' ATTENTION FROM THE DRESSES, THEY ARE EXHIBITED ON DUMMIES WITH IDENTICAL FACES. ONLY THE HAIR STYLES WERE COPIED FROM ORIGINAL PORTRAITS. EACH OF THE EIGHT ROOMS OF THE HALL IS LIKE A STAGE WITH ACTORS AND DECOR AND FURNISHINGS TYPICAL OF A CERTAIN TIME. THE FURNISHINGS CONSIST OF ORIGINAL PIECES OBTAINED FROM THE PRESIDENTIAL RESIDENCE. [THE PIANO, THE HARP, THE MUSIC STAND, THE BOOKS -- ALL WERE ONCE IN THE WHITE HOUSE.] THE HALL REFLECTS CHANGING STYLES OF INTERIOR DECORATION, FASHION AND EXAMPLES OF THE TASTES OF THE FIRST LADIES.

MARTHA WASHINGTON IS SEATED BESIDE HER TEA TABLE IN A PARLOR OF THE EXECUTIVE MANSION IN PHILADELPHIA. SHE WEARS A DRESS OF SALMON-PINK FAILLE AND HOLDS A BROWN SATIN BAG SHE MADE HERSELF. A SHORT, SLENDER

NARR: (CONT) ↑ FIGURE IN A SIMPLE DAYTIME DRESS OF HEAVY BLUE
CREPE IS ABIGAIL ADAMS, WIFE OF THE SECOND AMERICAN
PRESIDENT. HER LACE COLLAR IS PINNED WITH HER
TREASURED GOLD-AND-PEARL BROOCH.

TAPE: CUT TWO -- KLAPTHOR

"WE HAVE SOME THAT ARE FAVORITES WITH OUR AMERICAN PUBLIC: ONE IS THE DRESS THAT WAS WORN BY MARTHA WASHINGTON, WHICH IS QUITE INTERESTING. AND THIS DRESS IS OF HAND PAINTED FABRIC. THE DESIGN ON THE DRESS IS PAINTED ON IT AND IT DEPICTS THE INSECTS AND THE WILD FLOWERS OF NORTH AMERICA. ANOTHER VERY BEAUTIFUL DRESS THAT WAS WORN BY DOLLEY MADISON IS ONE THAT SHE WORE AT A NEW YEAR'S DAY RECEPTION IN WASHINGTON IN 1816. THIS GOWN IS A BEAUTIFUL BUFF COLOR SATIN WHICH IS EMBROIDERED WITH LITTLE BUTTERFLIES AND INSECTS, AND HAS A VERY NARROW BORDER OF FLOWERS AROUND THE EDGE. THE DRESS WORN BY MRS. ABRAHAM LINCOLN IS A VERY NICE ONE. IT IS A PURPLE VELVET."

NARR: MRS. WILLIAM HOWARD TAFT PRESENTED THE FIRST DRESS OF THE COLLECTION IN 1912 WHEN SHE WAS THE FIRST LADY. THE DESCENDANTS OF THE PRESIDENTS WERE MOST HELPFUL, AND BY 1920 THE COLLECTION WAS COMPLETE. SINCE THEN IT WAS ENLARGED BY EACH NEW FIRST LADY. DOLLEY MADISON WEARS A TURBAN, JUST AS SHE ALWAYS DID AT PUBLIC FUNCTIONS. HER GOWN IS IN THE EMPIRE STYLE. SHE HOLDS HER FAVORITE SANDALWOOD FAN.

TAPE: CUT THREE -- KLAPTHOR

"OF THE MODERN DRESSES, I THINK, THAT ONE THAT PEOPLE ARE OFTEN VERY INTERESTED IN IS ELEANOR ROOSEVELT'S WHICH IS A LIGHT PEACH COLOR SATIN DRESS WITH A BEAUTIFUL TRAIN THAT SWEEPS DOWN FROM THE SHOULDERS OF THE GOWN. AND THERE IS THE FAMOUS MAMIE'S PINK DRESS THAT WAS WORN BY MAMIE EISENHOWER AT HER INAUGURAL BALL. IT IS EMBROIDERED ALL OVER THE DRESS WITH PINK RHINESTONES THE SAME SHADE AS THE DRESS. THE DRESS THAT

TAPE: MRS. KENNEDY WORE TO HER INAUGURAL BALL IS ONE THAT
(CONT) SHE DESIGNED HERSELF. IT IS OF WHITE SILK COVERED
WITH WHITE CHIFFON, VERY PLAIN. ANOTHER VERY
HANDSOME DRESS IS THE ONE THAT MRS. NIXON WORE TO HER
INAUGURAL BALL WHICH HAS A COMPLETELY JEWELLED AND
BRAIDED LITTLE BOLERO JACKET."

NARR: THE "FLAPPER" PERIOD OF THE 1920 IS REPRESENTED BY THE
*(C)
P
T)* RED CHIFFON VELVET DRESS OF GRACE COOLIDGE. LOU HOOVER
WEARS LUSTRIOUS PALE-GREEN SATIN THAT FALLS INTO DRAPES.
LADY BIRD JOHNSON'S GOWN IS JONQUIL-YELLOW. ALL RECENT

FIRST LADIES ARE PLACED IN A REPLICA OF THE WHITE HOUSE
EAST ROOM. THE GOLDEN FURNITURE WAS RETIRED FROM THE
MANSION BY MRS. FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT IN 1937.

BUT WHO TAKES CARE OF THESE DRESSES?

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- KLAPTHOR

"WE HAVE A VERY FINE VOLUNTEER SERVICE HERE AT THE
SMITHSONIAN, AND I HAVE A DEDICATED GROUP OF LADIES WHO
ARE WILLING TO TAKE TOURS THROUGH THE FIRST LADIES HALL.
WHEN THEY AGREE TO DO THE JOB, THEY AGREE TO GIVE ONE
DAY A WEEK TAKING PEOPLE THROUGH THE HALL AND TELLING
THEM ABOUT THE DRESSES, AND TELLING THEM ABOUT THE LADIES
WHO WORE THE DRESSES. THEY HAVE TO UNDERGO A VERY
RIGOROUS TRAINING PERIOD. THEY HAVE TO LEARN THE SCRIPT,
THEY HAVE TO BE CHECKED OUT BY THOSE OF US WHO ARE ON THE
CURATORIAL STAFF. THEY DO ALL OF THIS JUST OUT OF THE
LOVE OF IMPARTING KNOWLEDGE TO THE MANY VISITORS WHO
COME TO THE SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION."

NARR: THOSE EIGHT VOLUNTEER GUIDES CONDUCT TWO TOURS DAILY
WITH A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF EVERY ITEM. SOME ARE
ALSO ALWAYS IN THE HALL TALKING TO THE VISITORS AND
ANSWERING THEIR QUESTIONS. THEY ARE HOUSEWIVES
CONTRIBUTING THEIR FREE TIME TO HELP WASHINGTONIANS
AND GUESTS FROM OTHER STATES AND OTHER COUNTRIES TO GET
BETTER ACQUAINTED WITH AMERICAN HISTORY.

ANNCR: THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE: WASHINGTON, D.C. -- OF PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS HERE IN THE CAPITAL OF THE UNITED STATES, BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE VOICE OF AMERICA EACH WEEK AT THIS TIME. TODAY, YOU HEARD ABOUT THE FIRST LADIES HALL. NEXT _____ ANOTHER DATELINE.

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